

XXXVII.—*The Birds of the Island of Raasay.*

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ALTHOUGH the avifauna of the Inner Hebrides has been most fully investigated by Mr. Harvie-Brown, my friend the late T. E. Buckley, R. Gray, and others, I think that it may not be out of place, and may be of some interest, to record my notes and observations made during a residence of nearly seven years on one of the group.

The island of Raasay is one of the most northerly of the Inner Hebrides, lying between the north-east side of Skye and the mainland of Ross; about ten miles in a bee-line from the latter, and from one to six miles from Skye. It is about fifteen miles long, with an average breadth of two and a half miles, the greatest height being 1456 feet. Taken as a whole, it is very well wooded (about one thousand acres of plantation and natural woodland), with numerous sheltered corries, small burns, and lochs. There is very little arable ground (about three hundred acres), which no doubt accounts for the scarcity of some species. The facts of the population being very small, and of the little interest taken by the island boys in nesting, give a fearlessness to many birds which I have never noticed elsewhere. Perhaps what struck me most, although a well-known fact, was the regularity with which the same birds came back year after year to breed in, or quite close to, their old nesting-sites—birds with such divergent habits as the Woodcock, Common Sandpiper, Ring-Ousel, Peregrine Falcon, Kestrel, and Gold-crest. I give the various instances under each bird's heading. In all I noticed one hundred and forty species, of which eighty-nine were breeding on the island. No doubt I overlooked many immigrants and possibly a few breeding birds; some migrants I feel sure about, but shall not mention, as they were not definitely identified. The large quantities of Ravens, Hooded Crows, and Buzzards which regularly appeared after stormy weather in September and remained until the following spring were no doubt attracted by the rabbits, many hundreds of the late litters dying during the winter. These and the hares

probably also accounted for the presence of from one to three Golden Eagles : they were generally immature birds.

Geologically the i-land consists, roughly, of red sandstone on the west and limestone on the east, the coast-line on the latter side being very rugged, with fine cliffs and bold headlands. The climate is very mild, but wet, the average annual rainfall for seven years being 70 inches.

During the late spring, summer, and autumn of 1900 I was in South Africa, so made no notes at that period.

MISSEL-THRUSH. *Turdus viscivorus*.

Not a common bird, but a few pairs breed annually.

SONG-THRUSH. *Turdus musicus*.

Large numbers breed on the island, mostly by the seashore, their nests being placed on rocks or ledges where there are no suitable bushes or shrubs. One pair bred yearly on a ledge in a large cave. In the year 1899 there was a very large autumn migration passing over the island—by far the largest I have noticed ; the birds were passing due north and south.

REDWING. *Turdus iliacus*.

In some years large numbers passed on their southern migration. There was a continual stream from October 20th to the 24th, 1899, passing day and night—seen by day and heard at night. Large flocks of Fieldfares were passing over at the same time. Very few remained for the winter, and in some years none were observed after the southern migration was over. Comparatively small numbers were seen on the northern migration.

FIELDFARE. *Turdus pilaris*.

With the exception of the autumn of 1899, no very large quantities were noticed. Occasional isolated flocks of from twenty to fifty birds arrived and remained for a few days all through the winter.

BLACKBIRD. *Turdus merula*.

Common on the south end of the island, where many pairs breed, but nothing like so numerous as the Song-Thrush.

RING-OUSEL. *Turdus torquatus.*

These birds arrived between the 10th and the 18th of April, and were quite common on the high ground, there being one or more nests by the side of every burn, besides many scattered along the rough heathery banks. One pair bred for three consecutive years in a bank within a few feet of an old nest. At the end of July and during August these birds to a great extent left the high moorlands, both old and young frequenting the large bracken-beds on the lower ground, some of which are only a few feet above the sea-level. The number of nests was about the same every year.

WHEATEAR. *Saxicola oenanthe.*

Appears in numbers from the 10th to the 12th of April and spreads all over the island. I have found some nests on the east side at an elevation of twelve hundred and fifty feet, and others only a few feet above high-water mark, one only two feet above. The nests are generally placed under stones.

WHINCHAT. *Pratincola rubetra.*

Very scarce: a few were seen in the early summer. One pair remained all through the summer of 1901. I never found the nest, but saw the young on June 23rd.

STONECHAT. *Pratincola rubicola.*

Quite a common bird and resident; nearly every large sheltered corrie holds a pair. The young disappear in the autumn, but I have noticed no additional arrivals in the spring, the breeding birds being about the same in number every year.

ROBIN. *Erithacus rubecula.*

Scattered in the woods and round the crofts and shore, but not very numerous. There was a nest for several seasons in a small hollow in a beech-tree close to the house. I removed the nest after the young had flown, and the same site was used for four out of five years by a pair of Spotted Flycatchers.

WHITETHROAT. *Sylvia cinerea.*

Only a stray visitor. I noticed it on May 30th, 1896,

also in June 1901 on three occasions, but do not think that a pair remained to breed.

REDSTART. *Ruticilla phœnicurus.*

Three pairs nested in the summer of 1896, and since then a few have bred every year, but I have never found more than three nests, although many more pairs occurred. Curiously enough, the site chosen was generally in a hole under a large stone on the ground; apparently there were much better sites available. The positions chosen seemed more suited to Wheatears than Redstarts\*.

GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN. *Regulus cristatus.*

Fairly plentiful in the fir-woods on the south of the island. One pair bred for three years in the same spruce-tree, within two or three feet of the old nest. Greatly increased numbers were observed in the late autumn. On December 18th, 1899, there were between two and three hundred in some rough heathery banks on the outskirts of a wood, the most I ever saw there together. Apparently they had only just arrived; they were extremely tame, letting me walk to within a yard or two of them.

WILLOW-WREN. *Phylloscopus trochilus.*

One of the commonest migrants, and a great many remain to breed. In the beginning of June 1901 a pair built in a large fuchsia-bush six feet six inches from the ground, this being the only instance which I have come across of a nest in such a place. There were excellent sites in the banks, &c., close by, where there were several nests placed in ordinary situations.

SEDGE-WARBLER. *Acrocephalus phragmitis.*

A rare visitor. The only occasion on which I found the nest on the island, placed in some thick bushes by the side of a loch, was in June 1899.

HEDGE-SPARROW. *Accentor modularis.*

Scattered over most parts of the island. Resident.

\* [We have found the nest of this species among grass on the ground.—EDD.]

DIPPER. *Cinclus aquaticus*.

One or two pairs on every stream. Resident.

LONG-TAILED TIT. *Acredula rosea*.

Common and resident for the whole year. It nests in far higher situations than I have noticed elsewhere. Several nests were built in Scotch firs and against the trunks of lichen-covered oaks at heights varying from 15 to 35 feet from the ground. Large numbers of these birds, together with Blue Tits, Coal-Tits, and Gold-crests, congregate and hunt for food in the fir-woods during hard weather.

GREAT TITMOUSE. *Parus major*.

Uncommon; but a few pairs breed every year.

COAL-TITMOUSE. *Parus britannicus*.

The commonest of all the Titmice; large numbers nest in old stumps of trees, in walls, and even in holes in banks.

MARSH-TITMOUSE. *Parus palustris*.

This bird I have only occasionally observed during hard weather in the winter, generally in company with other Tits. It was never seen during the summer.

BLUE TITMOUSE. *Parus cæruleus*.

Quite common; many breed, but it is not so numerous as the Coal-Tit.

WREN. *Troglodytes parvulus*.

Resident, and scattered over the whole area from the highest points to the sea-shore.

PIED WAGTAIL. *Motacilla lugubris*.

Summer visitant, arriving in the early spring and remaining until the end of September. Sometimes I have noticed a stray bird during winter about the farm-buildings, but only, I think, on three occasions.

GREY WAGTAIL. *Motacilla melanope*.

A resident, but the majority leave in September or October, only a few remaining for the whole year. In the summer nearly every stream has its pair of birds, and one stream in 1899 had three pairs on it.

YELLOW WAGTAIL. *Motacilla raii*.

A summer visitant and rare. I have found only two pairs breeding; they came at the end of April or beginning of May, nidification taking place soon after their arrival. The young and old birds left again between the 10th and the middle of September.

MEADOW-PIBIT. *Anthus pratensis*.

Resident; distributed over the whole island.

TREE-PIBIT. *Anthus trivialis*.

Summer visitant, nests regularly at the edges of the woods. Not common.

ROCK-PIBIT. *Anthus obscurus*.

Plentiful all round the coast.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. *Muscicapa grisola*.

Regular visitant; the site used for four out of five years was that in which a pair of Robins had first brought off their brood of young. In the summer of 1901 I knew of five pairs nesting. They arrive late in May or in the beginning of June, and leave again by the end of August.

SWALLOW. *Hirundo rustica*.

Five or six pairs inhabited the ruins of Brochil Castle at the north end of the island. I constantly observed several flying about the cliffs on the east side, but I never saw a nest there.

HOUSE-MARTIN. *Chelidon urbica*.

A few were observed in the late spring of 1896, 1897, 1898, and 1901, but none remained to breed.

SAND-MARTIN. *Cotile riparia*.

Noticed every spring in small numbers, remaining from four to seven days. If there had been any suitable sand-banks I think that they would have bred.

TREE-CREEPER. *Certhia familiaris*.

Resident, and very numerous in a large fir-wood. A few individuals were also to be met with wherever there was any bush or natural woodland.

GOLDFINCH. *Carduelis elegans*.

Rare. On May 8th, 1897, I first saw a hen Goldfinch eating dandelion-seed on the lawn; she remained about the place for four days. A few days later I saw a pair; they subsequently nested in the garden, rearing four young. They all disappeared about the middle of September. The following year, 1898, a pair built their nest in a birch-tree, about three miles from the first site; we constantly saw the old birds and the young feeding on thistle-down and dandelion-seeds.

Since 1898 no more specimens have been identified.

GREENFINCH. *Ligurinus chloris*.

Rare, an occasional pair nesting in the shrubberies. It is more often seen during the winter.

During the winters of 1896, 1898, 1899, and 1901 a good many were observed associating with Yellowhammers, &c., about the corn-ricks.

HOUSE-SPARROW. *Passer domesticus*.

Very numerous. Resident.

TREE-SPARROW. *Passer montanus*.

Nests regularly in some large spruce- or Scotch fir-trees. Resident, but does not appear to be increasing in numbers.

CHAFFINCH. *Fringilla cælebs*.

Very common. Resident. The birds apparently do not all nest, as I have frequently seen small flocks of from eight to twenty individuals together throughout the summer.

BRAMBLING. *Fringilla montifringilla*.

A rare visitor. During some hard frost and snow on February 10th and 11th, 1900, I saw seven or eight of these birds feeding along with some Chaffinches by corn-stacks.

LINNET. *Linota cannabina*.

About six pairs nest annually in a patch of old gorse some two acres in extent; this is the only spot where they are to be found. In the autumn they migrate.

LESSER REDPOLL. *Linota rufescens*.

Common, breeding in all the woods. Its numbers are

greatly augmented during the winter, when small flocks may be seen in the birch-woods.

TWITE. *Linota flavirostris*.

Nests yearly, but in sparse numbers.

BULLFINCH. *Pyrrhula europæa*.

A few scattered pairs are found in the more wooded parts, where they breed regularly. This species is decreasing in numbers; about fifteen years ago it was very plentiful, as the keepers inform me.

CROSSBILL. *Loxia curvirostra*.

In the winter of 1896 I saw several flocks in a big fir-wood, and also among the birch-trees, but I did not find a nest until the 10th of May, 1898, when I saw the young, fully fledged, and shot an old and young bird for identification. In 1899 and 1901 there were, I know, two nests in the same wood, placed on the horizontal branches of large Scotch firs. In no other winter were such large flocks of these birds seen as in 1896.

CORN-BUNTING. *Emberiza miliaria*.

Extremely abundant during the nesting-season, a pair breeding close to nearly every small patch of cultivated ground. A few are resident. The late Mr. T. E. Buckley and I saw two pairs on January 23rd, 1899, and some could be seen on almost any day during the winter.

YELLOWHAMMER. *Emberiza citrinella*.

Resident, but not plentiful.

REED-BUNTING. *Emberiza schoeniclus*.

Nesting in certain suitable situations. It has not been observed during the winter. Uncommon.

SNOW-BUNTING. *Plectrophenax nivalis*.

Small flocks come and go after snow-storms and hard weather all through the winter months.

STARLING. *Sturnus vulgaris*.

Not very plentiful during the summer. A large increase takes place during the late autumn, the birds resorting to a very thick young larch-plantation to roost.



CHOUGH. *Pyrhocorax graculus.*

Very scarce. Five Choughs were on the rocks by the sea-shore to the west of the island on January 3rd, 1898. On January 5th of that year three Choughs were seen in the same locality: these were the only instances of their occurrence noticed. Afterwards I was informed that a very small colony breeds yearly in some precipitous cliffs a few miles away in the Isle of Skye. No doubt the birds seen were from this colony.

JACKDAW. *Corvus monedula.*

A few nest on the high cliffs on the east side, but are much harried by a pair of Peregrines. Greatly increased numbers are to be seen in the autumn and consort with flocks of Rooks.

CARRION-CROW. *Corvus corone.*

Two were trapped by a keeper in the autumn of 1897; I have no other record.

HOODED CROW. *Corvus cornix.*

Very common during the nesting-season. Quantities of migrants also arrive in September and remain throughout the winter. On one occasion two keepers and I saw forty-five of these birds in one flock.

ROOK. *Corvus frugilegus.*

A large rookery formerly existed on the island, but it was done away with between the years 1890 and 1902 on account of the harm the birds did by sucking the eggs of Grouse, &c. From 1895, old and young arrived about the end of June, and a colony of about two hundred remained through the winter, roosting in a very thick spruce-wood. If the weather remained fine for any length of time, they changed their sleeping-quarters to some bare rocks by the sea.

RAVEN. *Corvus corax.*

Three pairs nest annually in quite inaccessible places. Additional numbers arrive in September, roosting on some very high precipitous cliffs, where I have counted thirty-two on the wing at the same time.

SKYLARK. *Alauda arvensis*.

A few pairs are distributed over the island, but are not numerous.

SWIFT. *Cypselus apus*.

Every year in the late spring a few are seen, and again at the beginning of August for a day or two, but none have been known to breed.

NIGHTJAR. *Caprimulgus europæus*.

A sparse but annual visitor. A pair used to nest in the open space of a fir-wood quite close to the house every year. One of the birds was often to be seen late on a summer evening perched on a high garden-wall, which seemed a favourite position for the emission of its peculiar whirring note. On one occasion the bird continued its whirring for a second or two over five minutes without intermission; this was the greatest length of time so occupied to my knowledge.

CUCKOO. *Cuculus canorus*.

Very plentiful. During some summers it was more numerous than in any other part of the country that I have visited. The Meadow-Pipit's was the favourite nest in which to deposit its eggs.

BARN-OWL. *Strix flammea*.

An occasional visitor. I saw the first on January 29th, 1897, and others on December 19th, 1900, and January 12th, 1901; probably the latter was the bird observed on December 19th, as it was in the same locality.

LONG-EARED OWL. *Asio otus*.

Generally one brood is found every year, an old Hooded Crow's nest being the favourite site. I never noticed more than one pair.

SHORT-EARED OWL. *Asio brachyotus*.

Frequently flushed by Snipe- and Woodcock-shooters in the winter. It does not breed on the island at the present time, but from the keeper's account it used to do so regularly.

TAWNY OWL. *Syrnium aluco*.

In 1901 a pair took up their quarters in an old hollow tree. They reared three young.

HEN-HARRIER. *Circus cyaneus*.

I saw a single bird on October 18th, 1899, and again later in the same year. In 1901 three were observed. Formerly this was quite a common species, six pairs nesting on the island, but unfortunately they were all killed.

BUZZARD. *Buteo vulgaris*.

A pair used to nest annually in the cliffs on the east side of the island, and two pairs bred there in 1901. In the early autumn the migrants arrive, and a good many remain throughout the winter. On the evening of December 29th, 1899, eleven Buzzards were circling over a large pine-wood, their favourite roosting-quarters in rough stormy weather.

GOLDEN EAGLE. *Aquila chrysaëtus*.

From one to three birds were generally on our ground, both in winter and summer—immature specimens, as a rule. On January 8th, 1900, when returning from Woodcock-shooting, my friend Mr. C. H. Akroyd and I came upon two Golden Eagles gorging on the carcass of a dead sheep in a small corrie; three Buzzards and seven Ravens were settled on some rocks close by, waiting for their share. A very fine sight it was, when these twelve birds rose and circled round. In December 1896 a friend and I saw a mature Golden Eagle hunting over a hill-side. The bird (a hen, judging from the size) picked up a mountain-hare in her talons, when she was immediately mobbed by five Ravens. We watched the scene for about ten minutes; eventually the Eagle, when at a height of about 400 feet, dropped the hare, whereupon the Ravens at once left her and dived to the ground after it croaking. The fact may be interesting, as there are many disputes as to the carrying capabilities of this species. An immature Eagle which I caught in a hollow by a stream when gorged, and kept for several months, could easily take a dead rabbit to a perch from the ground; she usually

dragged it up to a stone about nine inches from the ground, and then flapped with it to her perch.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE. *Haliaëtus albicilla*.

An occasional visitor in autumn and winter. On September 22nd, when stalking, I saw an adult Sea-Eagle mobbed by eleven Hooded Crows; they compelled the Eagle to settle on the heather only about sixty paces from the spot where I was hiding. The Hoodies settled down as well, one or two occasionally rising and making false stoops at the Eagle's head; they so worried her that she rose, but only flew about fifty yards before again dropping into the heather. The baiting, for I can call it by no other word, again went on until the Eagle made up her mind for one final dash, and got over the edge of a cliff about two hundred yards away, upon which the Hoodies at once left her. With my Zeiss glasses I could see every movement; several times when the Crows approached too closely on the ground, the Eagle struck out with one foot, but they were far too wary to go within reach. I am sorry to say that in the autumn of 1899 an immature bird of this species was picked up dead with a rabbit-trap on its foot; it had been noticed for nearly a fortnight flying about, and died of starvation.

SPARROW-HAWK. *Accipiter nisus*.

Common. Nests annually.

GREENLAND FALCON. *Hierofalco candicans*.

On October 6th, 1896, a Greenland Falcon was crossing the moor. I hear that a short time afterwards a specimen was shot in the Isle of Skye—possibly the same individual. The bird which I saw was very tame, and passed within forty yards of me.

PEREGRINE FALCON. *Falco peregrinus*.

One pair nests regularly on the face of an absolutely impregnable cliff on the east coast of Raasay. It is quite a common species during the autumn and winter. I have been fortunate enough to witness many very interesting flights, but will only instance two—one to shew this Falcon's pertinacity, and the other its boldness and fearlessness of

mankind:—On August 8th, 1901, a large Peregrine flew after an Arctic Tern; they ringed to a great height, the Falcon stooping twelve times. The Tern, apparently with little effort, avoided every stoop, and kept up its continuous scolding note the whole time.

On September 24th, 1898, when I was walking in line shooting, a hen Pheasant was put up from a bed of bracken and wheeled back over us; a small Peregrine which was passing at once flew after her, crossing about forty feet over our heads. The Pheasant only just got to cover in time, apparently tumbling more than flying into the thick bracken.

MERLIN. *Falco æsalon.*

One or two pairs take up their quarters every year on some part of the ground; they do not appear to have any favourite spot.

KESTREL. *Tinnunculus alaudarius.*

Plentiful. One pair nested in 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, and 1901, in the same hole in a cliff. I am not sure what happened in the summer of 1900, as I was away.

CORMORANT. *Phalacrocorax carbo.*

This species is nothing like so numerous as the Shag. On returning to their roosting-place, Cormorants can generally be distinguished from Shags by their flying at a much greater height: they will also cut off corners, by crossing necks of land, a thing which a Shag is loth to do.

SHAG. *Phalacrocorax graculus.*

These birds frequent the shore in large numbers, a considerable colony nesting in a cave and on the ledges outside it. The same cave is used as a roosting-place during the winter.

GANNET. *Sula bassana.*

Fairly common all through the summer, while an increase in numbers occurs during the autumn. The herring-supply seems to regulate the quantity arriving, as in good years they are plentiful and in bad seasons scarce. Immature specimens are rarely observed.

HERON. *Ardea cinerea*.

A heronry of small extent existed for many years at the south of the island in some very tall fir-trees, but unfortunately the birds were driven away. None were allowed to be killed after 1894, with the good result that in the early spring of 1896 two pairs nested in some low birch-trees on the north of the property, about nine miles from the old station. In 1898 these had increased to four pairs, one nest being actually placed on the ground at the side of a small islet in a fresh-water loch. Two more nests were added in 1901 about half a mile away, also in very small birch-bushes, nine feet from the ground.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE. *Anser albifrons*.

The first which I observed were seven in a flock on a grassy swamp, October 6th, 1896. On October 4th, 1898, eleven were seen at the same place. In the beginning of October 1901 eight or nine were again seen. They apparently only frequented this one locality, and merely remained for a day or two.

BRENT-GOOSE. *Bernicla brenta*.

Small numbers are seen on the coast nearly every autumn about the middle of October; they only remain for a short time.

BARNACLE-GOOSE. *Bernicla leucopsis*.

A few of these Geese are seen occasionally in flocks of from six to twelve all through the winter; they resort to a small island, feeding on the grass. I constantly saw them in 1896, 1897, and 1898, but none in 1899 or 1901. On October 16th, 1896, I observed a large flock of about a hundred Geese going south, flying in a V-shaped formation, but at too great a height to be identified. Their gaggling drew my attention to them, or they would never have been noticed. On several other occasions I have seen Geese going both south and north, but too far off to make out the species.

BEWICK'S SWAN. *Cygnus bewicki*.

On February 9th, 1900, five mature birds were in a

sheltered sea bay; the weather was very stormy, with frost and snow. These were the only examples seen.

COMMON SHIELD-DUCK. *Tadorna cornuta.*

Does not breed with us. An occasional specimen is seen during the summer.

WIGEON. *Mareca penelope.*

In January 1900 large numbers were on the coast; as a rule they are scarce, there being no good feeding-grounds for them.

WILD DUCK. *Anas boscas.*

Nearly every loch, both large and small, holds a breeding pair. During the winter many more arrive, feeding at the mouths of the burns.

COMMON TEAL. *Querquedula crecca.*

Often seen in small numbers during the winter.

For five consecutive years a pair bred on some tussocky lumps of grass in a shallow weedy loch.

SHOVELER. *Spatula clypeata.*

A single straggler, a female, remained on a fresh-water loch for about two weeks in 1902. She was first seen on February 4th. I noticed her with my glasses in company with five Mallards.

TUFTED DUCK. *Fuligula cristata.*

Not uncommon during the winter.

SCAUP. *Fuligula marila.*

On December 12th, 1897, four Scaup-Ducks were seen swimming towards a mud-flat. On January 5th, 1898, five birds were seen at the same place. I also occasionally saw them at sea when coasting round the island in a launch.

POCHARD. *Fuligula ferina.*

From time to time an individual is seen (and sometimes shot) in winter on the lower fresh-water lochs.

GOLDEN-EYE. *Clangula glaucion.*

Arrives during the first week in October and remains all the winter, a few birds generally haunting every sheltered sea bay.

Sometimes, but rarely, they go to the fresh-water lochs. It is extremely amusing to stalk them, and to fire a shot as they rise from the water. On one occasion three birds were on a loch, and although I purposely avoided hitting them, at the flash and report of the gun all three birds fell into the water as if killed, diving at once for a long distance. If swimming, they will dive at the flash, their sight is so keen.

LONG-TAILED DUCK. *Harelda glacialis*.

Fairly numerous on the coast during the winter, generally some distance out at sea.

EIDER DUCK. *Somateria mollissima*.

I think that the numbers increase every year. A pair bred in 1897, and had been sitting for some time on June 12th, when the nest was found. Three pairs bred in June 1899. The nests were placed in very exposed situations, among short heather and stones. Unluckily, the Greater Black-backed Gulls stole all the eggs or swallowed the young immediately after they were hatched.

COMMON SCOTER. *Edemia nigra*.

A regular winter visitor, arriving in small flocks.

GOOSANDER. *Mergus merganser*.

Rare, but a few are seen nearly every winter. One was shot accidentally on January 5th, 1898, on a fresh-water loch close to the sea.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER. *Mergus serrator*.

Very common, nesting in numbers. In June 1899 there were eight nests in a space of two hundred yards, and four on a rocky islet covered with rough heather, about forty yards long by twenty broad, besides dozens along the coast-line. This bird was also breeding on two fresh-water lochs. The largest clutch of eggs seen was sixteen, but from nine to eleven seems to be the usual number. On July 7th, 1901, I saw a Greater Black-backed Gull worry a small flotilla of newly-hatched Mergansers until they were utterly exhausted and could dive no more, when two were rapidly picked up off the sea and swallowed. *Larus marinus* causes much havoc



among the young of this species. The nests are usually safe, as they are so well and carefully hidden. A pair used the same breeding-place for three years in succession, and they invariably, if undisturbed, chose a site within a few yards of the previous year's nest.

RING-DOVE. *Columba palumbus.*

Common in the woods; about the same number breed every year. A flock of from sixty to eighty remains for the whole winter; there is no increase of numbers during that season. There is not enough arable ground to support many.

ROCK-DOVE. *Columba livia.*

Quantities inhabit the small caves on the coast.

PHEASANT. *Phasianus colchicus.*

Originally imported, and in a good season does well. Pheasants are extremely stupid in certain lights; they constantly try to settle on the sea when it is smooth, with a slight swell, mistaking the shadow of the swell for a bank, and consequently get drowned unless picked up by a boat.

PARTRIDGE. *Perdix cinerea.*

Partridges have been imported and a few have bred with us, but they do not thrive, and gradually disappear. Before leaving the island they wander to the high ground; the last covey was seen on the moor, six miles from its usual haunt, and this was the last heard of it.

RED GROUSE. *Lagopus scoticus.*

The Grouse of Raasay, which are fairly numerous, are much darker in plumage than the mainland birds and of a greater average weight.

BLACK GROUSE. *Tetrao tetrix.*

Decreasing in numbers.

WATER-RAIL. *Rallus aquaticus.*

Rare, with the exception of the winter of 1899, when numbers were seen when we were Snipe-shooting, six being shot by my friends, who did not know the bird. It never remains to breed.

CORN-CRAKE. *Crex pratensis*.

Arrives in considerable numbers from the 21st to the 26th of May: every small field has its pair, and even on the moor and sea-shore there are scattered couples. They leave very early, from the 7th to the 15th of August. On three occasions only have I seen a Land-Rail after the 20th of August, and in each case it was flushed out of a bed of bracken.

MOORHEN. *Gallinula chloropus*.

Two pairs nest on a sheltered loch every year, but the numbers never increase. About October 15th to 25th they migrate, and none are seen during the winter.

COOT. *Fulica atra*.

Sparingly seen during the autumn and winter; it does not breed with us, although a few miles away, in Skye, it does so in some suitable localities.

GOLDEN PLOVER. *Charadrius pluvialis*.

Resident, a few nests being scattered over the moorland. After gales and snow a large increase takes place; I have seen flocks of between two and three hundred birds together on the shore during exceptionally hard weather.

RINGED PLOVER. *Ægialitis hiaticola*.

This charming little bird nests on the shore wherever there is any shingle.

LAPWING. *Vanellus vulgaris*.

From twelve to fifteen pairs breed on one part of the ground and confine themselves to it, although thousands of acres of land appear equally well adapted for their requirements. About the same number return every year, but they do not increase, although they are not molested in any way.

OYSTER-CATCHER. *Hematopus ostralegus*.

Scattered at more or less regular intervals all round the coast-line; they return year after year to nest in the same spots. For five successive years one place was occupied by a pair, and woe to another Oyster-catcher or Gull which

ventured too close to their territory. The eggs vary from three to four, the former being the usual number.

WOODCOCK. *Scolopax rusticula.*

This island is one of the most favoured spots for Woodcock, if not the most favoured of all, in Great Britain or Ireland. The mild climate, coupled with the large number of springs, feeding-places, and excellent cover, no doubt accounts for the quantity of immigrants which arrive about the first week in November. They breed here to a certain extent; there are, perhaps, from twenty to twenty-five nests a year. I found one in the spring of 1898 with four eggs: three were hatched off, the fourth addled. The following spring a nest was made only nine inches from the previous year's site, again with the result of one bad and three fertile eggs. In 1901 a nest was found only two feet away from the old place; this time all four eggs were good. The home-bred birds leave their breeding-haunts between the 20th and the end of July and frequent the bracken-beds at a much higher elevation, remaining there until about the 10th of September, when they migrate. The autumn immigrants begin to arrive from November 3rd to 5th, and at first scatter all over the open ground. As shewing the numbers that arrive, nearly nine hundred were killed in the winter of 1894-95 and four hundred and ninety-six in 1901-02. The severe spells of frost in the winters of 1894 and 1895 caused great havoc amongst them, no less than eleven being picked up dead by one frozen spring. On at least twelve occasions I have watched the old birds carrying their young to the feeding-grounds. For some years I weighed every Woodcock shot, the two heaviest being  $16\frac{1}{2}$  and  $16\frac{1}{4}$  oz. respectively; but these were exceptional weights, the average working out at  $12\frac{1}{4}$  oz.; this is a big average, but is accounted for by the exceptionally good feeding. The latest nest was on the 20th of June, with four fresh eggs, which were all hatched.

COMMON SNIPE. *Gallinago cælestis.*

Breeds in all places suited to its habits. It seems occasionally to have two nests a year, as I have found fresh

eggs in the middle of June and young in down on the 12th of August.

In the breeding-season I have seen the birds, after wheeling and drumming for some time in the air, descend almost perpendicularly and settle on the top of a birch-tree or a post, at the same time emitting a hoarse double note four or five times in succession. This peculiarity I noticed more especially with one pair of birds.

JACK SNIFE. *Limnocyptes gallinula*.

A few are found in two or three favourite boggy places. They manage to keep in good condition in the hardest weather, when the Common Snipes are quite thin. An individual has remained as late as the 3rd of June.

DUNLIN. *Tringa alpina*.

Breeds sparingly in marshy places on the open moorland from about the 20th to the 25th of May.

PURPLE SANDPIPER. *Tringa striata*.

Common on the rocky parts of the coast during the winter and spring. On January 24th, 1899, there were about fifty running about the rocks at the water-line, the greatest number that I have ever seen together.

KNOT. *Tringa canutus*.

Occurs sparsely during the winter. One bird in immature plumage was shot in January 1899 for purposes of identification.

COMMON SANDPIPER. *Tringoides hypoleucus*.

Extremely abundant, arriving at the end of April or the beginning of May, and breeding on the coast-line and on all the fresh-water lochs. The highest lochs, where four pairs breed, are above 1200 feet. I have found the nests at some distance from the water (150 yards) and a considerable height above it (from 40 to 100 feet). The birds return year after year to the same places. One pair nested four years out of five in a very unusual site, namely, in a rabbit-hole which had been tunnelled through the apex of a small bank; the length of the hole was 12 or 13 inches. In the

fifth year the nest was in the open, only two feet away from the same hole. The parents were so used to our passing that they became very tame, the sitting bird taking absolutely no notice when we peered into the hole to look at her on her nest. About the same number of pairs bred annually, with the exception of 1899, when there was only about one-third of the usual quantity.

REDSHANK. *Totanus calidris*.

Distributed along the whole coast; but, so far as I have noticed, only one pair breeds here.

GREENSHANK. *Totanus canescens*.

Rare. Occasionally seen in the autumn.

WHIMBREL. *Numenius phaeopus*.

A few are occasionally noticed from the beginning to the end of May. In 1901 several were seen at the end of May and during the first week of June.

CURLEW. *Numenius arquata*.

Breeds on the lower ground, both on the south and the west of the island.

ARCTIC TERN. *Sterna macrura*.

Very common, several small colonies nesting on rocky islets. About the same number breed every year, notwithstanding the fact that their eggs are taken regularly by the crofters. This species is much more plentiful than the Common Tern.

COMMON TERN. *Sterna fluviatilis*.

A small colony of from six to eight pairs breed on an isolated rock; these, with an occasional pair nesting in company with the Arctic Terns, are the only instances that I have observed.

KITTIWAKE. *Rissa tridactyla*.

About six nests yearly, in a cliff on the east of the island.

HERRING-GULL. *Larus argentatus*.

Some hundreds breed on the west coast, where a few pairs of Lesser Black-backed Gulls nest with them.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. *Larus fuscus*.

Numbers breed about half a mile away from the aforesaid colony of Herring-Gulls, but none remain during the winter. In June 1897 I took two eggs of a pale blue colour, which are now, I believe, at Cambridge.

COMMON GULL. *Larus canus*.

Scattered nests are found all round the coast, but in small numbers.

GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL. *Larus marinus*.

Only one nesting-place on the island. This species makes great havoc amongst the eggs and young of other birds. Many immature examples are resident during the whole year.

BLACK-HEADED GULL. *Larus ridibundus*.

Fairly common in early summer, but does not breed here.

RICHARDSON'S SKUA. *Stercorarius crepidatus*.

Often seen in the autumn chasing the Herring and Common Gulls to make them disgorge their prey.

STORM-PETREL. *Procellaria pelagica*.

Common after heavy gales from the north, but does not breed here.

MANX SHEARWATER. *Puffinus anglorum*.

Observed generally in both spring and summer, but not a resident.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER. *Colymbus glacialis*.

Immature birds are very common during the winter months, and on a foggy day or night their wild complaining cries may be heard at a great distance. Mature and immature birds again appear in the late spring and assemble in small numbers, four to eight together, May 15th being the latest date on which I have noticed them; they collect apparently before migrating to their breeding-haunts. None are seen again until the middle of August.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER. *Colymbus arcticus*.

I have on several occasions seen this bird, as well as the

Red-throated Diver, on a fresh-water loch, and had great hopes of their breeding with us, but they never did so. They are often seen on the sea as well.

RED-THROATED DIVER. *Colymbus septentrionalis*.

This and the preceding species are about equally numerous. The male bird is very inquisitive in the early summer, and likes to investigate unusual sights. I have lain in the heather by the side of a loch and waved a rod to puzzle him, when he dived and came closer and closer, even raising himself out of the water to try and get a better view of the strange object. He even approached within twenty yards of me, the female in the meantime remaining from fifty to sixty yards away; when his curiosity was satisfied, he dived and rejoined his mate.

LITTLE GREBE. *Tachybaptus fluviatilis*.

Two pairs nest yearly, each on a small sedge-covered loch.

RAZORBILL. *Alca torda*.

Thousands pass southward during the late summer and autumn, and again northward in the spring; they do not nest with us.

COMMON GUILLEMOT. *Lomvia troile*.

The same may be said of this bird as of the preceding, but it is seen in greater numbers.

BLACK GUILLEMOT. *Uria grylle*.

Common, breeding in many of the small caves; a few even nest in a large cave inhabited by a colony of Shags.

LITTLE AUK. *Mergulus alle*.

A few examples have been found washed up dead after a heavy northerly gale. In December 1899 two were caught alive, but much exhausted, on the shore of a small bay facing the Minch.

PUFFIN. *Fratercula arctica*.

Large quantities of these birds pass on their way to and from their breeding-stations.